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ABSTRACT

Brief descriptions are provided of the honors programs offered at six community college districts. After an introductory discussion of the benefits, goals, and elements of honors programs, spotlighted programs are described, with some variation, in terms of activities, admissions requirements, academic standards, faculty involvement, association with honors societies, and length of experience with these efforts. Descriptive information is provided on: (1) Wright College's (Chicago) Dean's Scholar Program, which features a total honors block program, special counseling, and an English honors program; (2) Loop College's (Chicago) Advanced Arts and Sciences Program, which utilizes specially designated courses, extra honors activities, and an innovative approach to transfer; (3) Richland College's (Dallas) accelerated and interdisciplinary courses, special science laboratories, and self-directed study courses; (4) Mountain View College's (Dallas) program integrating interdisciplinary courses with an outside speaker series; (5) West Los Angeles College's program involving a core of general education courses, interdisciplinary study, and special projects; (6) Maricopa County Community College District's program of honors sections, courses, and forums emphasizing preparation for transfer; (7) Miami-Dade Community College's special sections, interdisciplinary courses, faculty mentors, and special enrichment activities; and (8) St. Louis Community College at Forest Park's special contract system for awarding honors certification. (HB)

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TRANSFERS, HONORS AND EXCELLENCE:

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BULLETIN

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Transfer, Honors and Excellence: Six Districts Spotlighted

Honors programs have traditionally provided gifted students with the means to better express their intellectual and creative abilities. In the community college, an honors program can also serve to direct and motivate students toward successful transfer, and many of the colleges in the six districts are applying themselves to this task with vigor and ingenuity.

The honors programs that have been springing up on community college campuses across the country share some common goals: to strengthen the quality of the school's academic program as a whole, to attract and retain outstanding students and faculty, to enhance the public image of the community college as a place where exceptional scholarship is encouraged, and to provide the potential transfer student with a solid foundation of general education courses of superior quality.

The programs show some interesting variations—special course sections, in-class honors options and accelerated courses, special honors block programs, interdisciplinary course offerings, independent study projects, honors forums and outside speaker series and seminars, honors-related clubs and social events, scholarships and fee waiver opportunities, registration privileges, special recognition at graduation and on transcripts, and in some cases, special transfer benefits.

Whatever the format, a major advantage of an honors program is that it affords the academically advanced student an opportunity to work with other high-achieving students. Also, because honors classes are usually kept smaller than regular classes, the honors student has a better chance for quality interaction with his instructors.

After completing a two-year program in the community college, students who have also completed an honors program have an obvious advantage in terms of making a successful transfer—the high grades required to stay in an honors program as well as the special recognition they receive help distinguish the honors students as bright and highly-motivated individuals who are committed to gathering as many benefits as possible from their college experience.

Faculty participation in these programs is usually voluntary and carries with it a unique set of rewards. It enables participating faculty members to work with gifted students in a stimulating and challenging arena, and allows them to develop new courses as well as new approaches to the material itself.

Although the honors program is still a relatively new phenomenon—many of the programs in the six districts are either just beginning or are less than two years old—these thriving young programs may be early indications of a widespread movement to establish the honors program as an indispensable aspect of community college life. This issue of the *Bulletin* spotlights a representative cross-section of honors programs currently offered throughout the six districts, and looks at some distinguishing features of each.

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Chicago's High Standards Rate Transfer Benefits

Chicago's Wright and Loop Colleges both have well-developed and highly successful honors programs. Wright's Dean's Scholar Program is the older of the two, existing in its present form for a number of years. Students are recruited for the Dean's Scholar Program upon admission to the college. The requirements include an ACT composite score of 24, a ranking of at least the 15th grade level in a mandatory writing test, and first year college math placement. In order to stay in the program, students must maintain a 3.5 GPA.

The program begins with a total honors block program which is 15-18 hours of special honors courses to be taken the student's first semester. After that, students may enroll in individual honors sections which are offered as alternatives to many of the regular courses. In order to complete honors work in any course the student must complete a special paper along with additional supplemental course work.

A reception at the beginning of each semester welcomes all new honors students, and an honors counselor is assigned to work closely with each student along with other faculty advisors. Honors students at Wright form the heart of Phi Theta Kappa, the national honors society for junior and community colleges, and there are scholarships available for them through that society.

An interesting adjunct to the Dean's Scholar Program is an English Honors Program in which 50-60 percent of the honors students at Wright participate. The program offers more demanding versions of many of the advanced literature and composition courses offered by the department. At the end of each spring semester, a special luncheon is held by the department for all students in the English Honors Program.

Faculty members who wish to participate in either the Dean's Scholar Program or the English Honors Program volunteer to do so, and are selected on the basis of an approval from the Dean of Instruction. A five-year study instigated to verify the value of the Dean's Scholar Program is now in progress and will be completed at the end of the year.

Loop College's Advanced Arts and Sciences Program is one-year old. Approximately 75 of the 200 students who participate in this program are new this fall, 75 are continuing from last semester, and 50 of them ease their way into the program by taking a course or two at a time.

Students who wish to join the program must take a minimum of two courses per term that are designated Advanced Arts and Science courses. Admission requirements rely less on ACT and other test scores than on results of placement tests—students must place at or above a 15th grade level in the reading placement test, and at a freshmen level in the writing skills test. In order to stay in the program, students must maintain at least a B average in general education courses. Students who wish to join the program as second semester students must maintain a high grade point average in their general education courses and be recommended by their teachers.

Plans are being made to start a speakers forum, hold special afternoon coffees or teas, and give a reception at the beginning of each semester. Loop's program has a more informal tie-in with Phi Theta Kappa than Wright's but there is constant interaction between these two groups.

Two counselors and a number of volunteer faculty members work with students in the Advanced Arts and Sciences program. Extra work for honors within various courses is determined by the instructors of these courses. The instructors submit extra honors activities along with their regular course syllabi for approval by the program director, who is on the English staff and who is on special assignment to coordinate the program. The program is publicized in-house through memos in the college bulletin and at new student registration and orientation.

The Advanced Arts and Sciences program has a particularly interesting and innovative approach to transfer. Loop has made a tentative agreement with three private 4-year schools—DePaul University, Mundelein College, and Roosevelt University—to give preferential admissions treatment to Loop students who have completed the program. The first graduating class to have completed the full program will be the spring class of 1983.

First Annual Honors Day in Dallas

Dallas' Richland College initiated an extensive and widely varied honors program for its students within the last two years. It includes accelerated courses, interdisciplinary courses, special science laboratory sections, and individual-directed study courses. Class size is restricted, and although specific course offerings vary from year to year, nearly all major academic and technical disciplines are represented in the honors curriculum.

Students participate in the honors program in two ways. They may enroll in any honors course for which they are qualified, and upon completion, they will receive special designations beside the course on their transcripts. There is no minimum of hours or minimum overall GPA required for such enrollment. If students wish to qualify as Honors Scholars, however, they must complete seven honors courses with one course from each of the following areas: English/Foreign Language, Social Science, Math/Science, and Humanities. The three remaining courses may be taken from any other area of the curriculum. All seven courses must be completed within two years from the date of the students' enrollment in their first honors course.

Admission requirements for the Honors Scholar Program allow students to demonstrate superior ability in a number of ways. A student whose GPA was 3.5 or who placed at or above the 90th percentile on two out of three Richland College Assessment tests, and who had a combined score of 1100 on the SAT or a composite ACT score of at least 25 would, of course, qualify for the program by satisfying the traditional honors program requirements. However, a student without the high GPA, high percentile ranking, and strong showings on the ACT and SAT could also qualify for the Honors Scholar Program by demonstrating special abilities through a portfolio, audition, paper or special

Workshops Calendar Finalized

As part of its commitment to promote the liberal arts and to facilitate student transfer, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges will co-sponsor a series of workshops with the six community college districts. The calendar for these workshops has been finalized and the workshops will be held on the following dates:

October 28, 1982	*LOS ANGELES:*	*Transfer, Honors, and Excellence*
December 3, 1982	*ST. LOUIS:*	*Defining the Curriculum: Liberal Arts Career Options, Interdisciplinary Programs*
January 24, 1983	*MARICOPA:*	*Interdisciplinary Studies*
February 17, 1983	*MIAMI-DADE:*	*Defining the Associate Degree*
March 25, 1983	*DALLAS:*	*Liberal Arts in Occupational Areas*
May 6, 1983	*CHICAGO:*	*Student Academic Support Systems*

project and completing a successful interview with the Honors Program Committee.

Richland capitalizes on its regular visits from guest speakers by arranging seminars, workshops and conferences with these speakers for honors students. Besides the utilization of the outside speaker series, this college offers honors seminars that can include visiting lecturers, field trips, and travel abroad.

Honors students, as members of Phi Theta Kappa, participate in social events in addition to local, state and national conferences and summer institutes. In April, 1982, the Richland Phi Theta Kappa chapter initiated the first annual Honors Day, at which time outstanding students from each discipline and technical area were recognized and presented with awards. Honors students are frequently selected as tutors through the Center for Independent Study, and Phi Theta Kappa members graduate with special recognition.

Mountain View College has an interesting approach to integrating an honors program with both interdisciplinary courses and an outside speaker series. Among its honors offerings are a number of team-taught courses in which two disciplines are paired (e.g., world literature with American history, etc.) The courses are designed for interrelated assignments so that students taking a course which pairs English composition with humanities, for example, will write compositions about humanities.

Mountain View utilizes its guest lectures for its honors students by having them attend the lectures as part of their course work. Students from the honors history classes will study the topic of the lecture from a historical perspective, literature students from a literary perspective, etc.

Los Angeles Launches Off-Campus Internships

West Los Angeles College has launched the first community college honors program in the Los Angeles District, a faculty initiated effort. Admission requirements have been set whereby students must place at a freshman level in English and must have instructor recommendations to be eligible for the program.

The program promises to be varied and extensive, offering a number of options for participating students. A core of general education courses is set aside for honors students, as well as a number of interdisciplinary courses to choose from within the general education area. In addition to their honors course work, students will be responsible for conducting special projects and will be encouraged to participate in off-campus internships.

Maricopa's District-Wide Program Prepares Students For Transfer

In effect since 1981, Maricopa's highly successful district-wide honors program includes all seven of its community colleges. This program includes honors sections of traditional courses, special honors courses, honors forums and seminars, special performances, and social activities. The program emphasizes university parallel courses that prepare students for transfer to the best four-year colleges and universities.

Although admission requirements to the program differ somewhat from college to college, the general district requirements include a high GPA, high scores on ACT, SAT, or some equivalent demonstration of academic excellence, letters of recommendation from counselors or instructors, and a

summary of personal accomplishments, along with a statement of educational and career objectives.

Every year, the District holds an Honors Forum Series to which six notable speakers are invited to give lectures, seminars, and meet with all interested students and staff members. The series has a specific theme each year, and the speakers—outstanding humanists, scientists, industrialists, and social leaders—address the theme from the point of view afforded them by their respective fields of excellence. The theme for the 1982-83 Forum Series is "Technology: Its Impact on the Individual and Society."

The District has also developed a special honors course based on the lectures given in the Honors Forum Series. This interdisciplinary approach to various individual and social issues is supplemented with readings, and after the lectures, honors students visit with the speakers in small group settings. Assignments for the course might take the form of written and oral reports in which the students summarize the sources and scope of the issue addressed during the term, compare and contrast the rationale, perspectives and conclusions of the authors and lecturers, and define and defend their personal conclusions about the issue.

How students undertake honors work and receive honors credit in courses that do not have honors sections has been presented in an innovative way at Maricopa's Rio Salado College. If a student wishes to gain honors credit for a non-honors course, he/she and the instructor of the course agree to a Course Enrichment Plan (CEP). The CEP is a type of contract in which the student agrees to do one or more special assignments in order to earn honors credit. The special assignments could include extra reading, library research, field projects, or class presentations. The CEP explicitly provides for student-instructor consultation and the means by which the student's work will be evaluated.

Maricopa's committment to its honors program is great—keeping its classes small, its teaching methods flexible, and the interaction between staff and students constant. The program provides career advisement and assistance as well as special academic counseling. Honors students receive recognition of their honors achievements on transcripts, certificates and diplomas.

Miami-Dades's Full-Service Program Benefits Transfer Students

This fall Miami-Dade is initiating its first formal honors program. The program includes special sections of courses, interdisciplinary courses, honors seminars, special honors projects, faculty mentors and special enrichment activities.

In honors sections, students are asked to read more primary source materials, cover the subject areas in greater depth and breadth, write more short papers and long reports, and develop a contract with the instructor on a project to be completed for the course.

A student may be admitted to the program with a GPA of 3.5, graduation in the top 10% of the high school class, a combined score of 1100 on the SAT, an ACT composite score of 25, or at least 90 percent on two of the areas of the Miami-Dade Community College Entrance Assessment Test. Also, a student who demonstrates commitment and a desire to contribute to the program might be admitted on the basis of a teacher or counselor recommendation, a portfolio, paper, award or some other demonstration of excellence.

In order to stay in the program the student must carry at least 21 credits per academic year, earn a minimum of 18 credits in honors courses by graduation, maintain a 3.25 cumulative GPA, be a degree-seeking student, and contract with a faculty mentor to participate in at least two academic enrichment activities each year.

Honors students are offered an interesting selection of interdisciplinary courses. South Campus science majors, for example, may enroll in a group of honors courses consisting of history of science, English composition, and humanities. Students in this program are given a unique perspective on science by studying major scientific revelations along with the humanities of each era. Students at Miami-Dade are required to make a contract with their faculty advisors to participate in academic enrichment activities that will help them achieve their goals. These contracts can include working with a faculty member on a research project, putting on a special event for the college, and participating in an off-campus internship.

Miami-Dade offers all its honors students academic scholarships which cover matriculation fees, and makes special notations on the transcripts of all students who graduate from the program. Each honors course completed by a student is noted on his transcript with the letter H. All honors students receive special assistance in exploring upper division studies and/or career options. The Emphasis on Excellence Office and Student Services join efforts to help any interested honors students with the possibility of obtaining a transfer scholarship. A very helpful transfer benefit is also offered to students who complete the honors program. Students may have letters describing the quality of their work forwarded by Miami-Dade to any four-year institution to which they apply.

Each honors student is assigned a faculty mentor, who is from within the student's major area of interest. The mentor assists the student to whom he is assigned with registration, program conflicts, and career preparation. Mentors also assist students in individual honors explorations such as Miami-Dade's special Capstone Project—a three-credit project, creative or scholarly, which honors students are either required or strongly urged (depending on which campus the student matriculates) to complete. The project enables the student to demonstrate research skills as well as the ability to apply and present material. The Capstone project allows the student to develop a portfolio or major paper to present to four-year institutions, scholarship committees, or prospective employers.

St. Louis Opts for Special Contracts

St. Louis Community College's Forest Park Campus has incorporated a program whereby any student may sign a special contract with the instructor of any course in which he is enrolled to do extra work for honors. If all of the honors activities have been completed to the instructor's satisfaction, the participating student is given a small certificate, and receives a notation on his transcript that he completed honors work in that particular course. This is an informal type of program in which any willing student and/or staff member may participate.